

Amendments to the Claims: This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for handling objects, each object having an aperture therein defining a rim, the apparatus comprising a first set of jaws configured to move towards and away from one another, a second set of jaws configured to move towards and away from one another, the ~~second~~first set of jaws providing a support on which, in use, one or more objects ~~may~~are configured to be stacked, or unloaded from; said ~~first~~second set of jaws being located adjacent the ~~second~~first set of jaws such that, in use, said ~~first~~second set of jaws and said ~~second~~first set of jaws are configured to pass through said aperture; and means for effecting extension of the ~~first~~second set of jaws through the aperture of at least one of the objects, means for effecting displacement of the jaws of said first~~second~~ set of jaws away from another into engagement with the rim of the at least one of the objects, means for effecting retraction of the jaws of said first~~second~~ set of jaws away from one and another such as to position the rim over the ~~second~~first set of jaws, and means for effecting displacement of the jaws of said first~~second~~ set of jaws towards each other; and means for actuating the jaws of said second~~first~~ set of jaws away from one another into engagement with said rim, and for actuating the jaws of said second~~first~~ set of jaws towards each other, wherein during said engagement with said rim, said first set of jaws and said second set of jaws each exerts a radial gripping force on said rim.

2. (Currently Amended) An object handling apparatus according to claim 1 in which the first and second ~~sets~~ of jaws are elongate, and are substantially parallel to one another.

3. (Currently Amended) An object handling apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the ~~first~~second set of jaws is provided with a plurality of indentations spaced apart along a length thereof.

4. (Previously Presented) An object handling apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the support is provided with a plurality of indentations spaced apart along the length thereof.

5. (Previously Presented) An object handling apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the apparatus is provided with a sensor which is adapted to detect when a preset number of objects have been stacked on the support.

6. - 8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) In an apparatus as claimed in claim 1, a method of handling objects, each object having an aperture therein defining a rim, the method comprising; extending the firstsecond set of jaws through the aperture of at least one of the objects; displacing the jaws of said first second set of jaws away from one another into engagement with the rim of the at least one object; retracting the jaws of said firstsecond set of jaws such as to position the rim over the secondfirst set of jaws; displacing the jaws of said secondfirst set of jaws away from one another to engage the rim; and displacing the jaws of said firstsecond set of jaws towards one another wherein, during said engagement with said rim, said first set of jaws and said second set of jaws each exerts a radial gripping force on said rim.

10. - 13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amendment) A object handling apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the jaws of said first set of jaws are configured to move towards and away from one another in a direction that is substantially perpendicular to the direction in which the jaws of said second set of jaws are configured to move towards and away from one another.

15. (Currently Amended)) A method according to claim 9, in which the jaws of said firstsecond set of jaws are configured to move through the aperture along a first axis, and are configured to move towards and away from one another along a second axis, the first and second axes being substantially perpendicular with one another.

16. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 15, in which the jaws of said secondfirst set of jaws are configured to move towards and away from one another along a third axis that is substantially perpendicular to said first axis and said second axis.

17. (New) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the apparatus is configured to operate in a first mode of operation in which said rim is gripped by only said second set of jaws; a second mode of operation in which said rim is gripped by both of said first and second sets of jaws; and a third mode of operation in which said rim is gripped by only said first set of jaws.

18. (New) A method as claimed in claim 9, further comprising operating in a first mode of operation in which said rim is gripped by said only second set of jaws; operating in a second mode of operation in which said rim is gripped by both of said first and second sets of jaws; and operating in a third mode of operation in which said rim is gripped by only said first set of jaws.

19. (New) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second set of jaws has a free end that is free to extend through the aperture of at least one of said objects when the apparatus first engages with said at least one of said objects.